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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2944
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1976
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1999
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2120
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0665
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1397
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1755
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2176
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4607
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1260
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 000463

AF/S FOR S.HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B.PITTMAN
TREASURY FOR D.PETERS AND T.RAND
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR L.DOBBS AND E.LOKEN
COMMERCE FOR BECKY ERKUL
CIA WASHDC

SIPDIS

E.O.12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA CRACKDOWN: INTIMIDATION INCREASES AHEAD OF RUNOFF

¶1. SUMMARY: Alongside the ongoing ZANU-PF directed violence in advance of Zimbabwe's June 27 presidential election runoff, the Mugabe regime's crack down on dissenting opinion is increasingly targeting the independent media and even those within the state media who favor more balanced coverage. According to local media watch-dog organizations, at least five members of the foreign media and five Zimbabwean journalists have been arrested or detained in relation to their coverage of events in Zimbabwe since the March 29 elections, and others have been harassed and assaulted. In addition to outright violence, the systematic control of coverage and intimidation of journalists has also included the firing of a high-level media official for not following ruling party orders, the tightening of guidelines at the state-run Zimbabwean Broadcasting Corporation by ZANU-PF leaders, and a crackdown on the opposition press. Even as campaigning for the run-off begins, these severe assaults and limits on freedom of expression are yet more evidence that the conditions for free and fair elections do not exist. Examples of arrests, detention, intimidation and assault follow. END SUMMARY.

FOREIGN JOURNALISTS TARGETED

¶2. Foreign journalists have been a major target of the government's campaign against the independent media. On April 3, New York Times correspondent and Amcit Barry Bearak and British freelance journalist Steven Bevan were arrested for allegedly practicing journalism without accreditation under AIPPA. Both were acquitted on April 16 and left the country. Canadian Broadcast Corporation correspondent Adrienne Arseneault was detained and released the same day.

¶3. On March 27, Sipho Moses Maseko and Abdulla Ismail Gaibee, two South African engineers from Globecast Satellite, were arrested and accused of practicing journalism without accreditation. They were acquitted by a magistrate and released, but rearrested after police argued the magistrate's ruling was defective. After spending a

weekend in jail, the South Africans were re-acquitted on April 14 and left Zimbabwe without covering the elections, although they had in fact been accredited.

¶4. Another, journalist, British Times of London correspondent Jonathan Clayton, was arrested on April 9, and convicted of making a false declaration of the motives for his presence in the country. He was fined and deported to South Africa on April 17.

LOCAL JOURNALISTS ARRESTED

¶5. On May 8, police arrested Davison Maruziva, editor of the independent newspaper The Standard over an opinion piece by opposition leader Arthur Mutambara that appeared on April 20 under the headline: "A shameful betrayal of national Independence." In the piece, Mutambara sharply criticized Mugabe for his handling of the general election. He also accused the government of intimidation and questioned its right to stay in office. Maruziva was released on bail on May 12.

¶6. On May 7, police detained media lawyer Harrison Nkomo over allegations that he made an insulting statement about Mugabe on May 12. He allegedly made the statement while appearing in the High Court on behalf of freelance journalist Frank Chikowore, who together with the former Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists Luke Tamborinyoka and six others, faced charges of inciting public violence under the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). Chikowore and others were initially arrested for practicing journalism without a license under AIPPA after taking pictures of a bus allegedly burned by ZANU-PF supporters. After discovering Chikowore was in

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fact accredited, police charged him with burning the bus. Chikowore's trial is ongoing.

¶7. On May 5, police arrested and detained Reuters photographer Howard Burditt for three days for allegedly using a satellite phone to send pictures. Burditt, a Zimbabwean national was covering the aftermath of the election, when he was arrested and jailed. In a statement, Reuters said the company "has long had a legitimate and fully accredited bureau in Harare, and has always complied with Zimbabwean regulations with the aim of accurately reporting the news."

¶8. On April 10, former Zimbabwe Broadcasting Network (ZBC) journalist Margaret Ann Kriel was arrested in Bulawayo and charged with practicing journalism without an accreditation under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) after she allegedly interviewed several people, including opposition politicians. She was released on bail after being detained for two days and placed under house arrest.

Other Incidents

¶9. On May 16, four unknown assailants suspected of being ZANU-PF supporters assaulted freelance journalist Sydney Saize in Mutare, accusing him of being a "sell-out". Saize sustained a swollen lip. He writes for various online news agencies and is a correspondent for Voice of America's Studio 7, which has in the past year been jammed by government for its critical reporting of the political, social, and economic crisis in the country.

¶10. On April 17, individuals wearing army uniforms assaulted and robbed Zimbabwe Union of Journalists President Mathew Takaona. On April 18, journalist and VOA correspondent Stanley Karombo was assaulted by Zanu-PF supporters during Independence Day celebrations. After the assault, police searched Karombo's home and then detained him for four days before releasing him without charge.

TURNING ON THEIR OWN

¶11. On May 14, Henry Muradzikwa, the CEO of the state-run Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings (ZBH), was fired for reportedly defying an

order by Information and Publicity Minister Sikhanyiso Ndlovu and Permanent Secretary George Charamba to deny the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) any positive radio or television coverage and bar the MDC from placing campaign advertisements in advance of the June 27 presidential run-off. Muradzikwa has stated that he was unaware of the reason for his dismissal, though he did note in an interview with the Zimbabwe Independent that "nobody has the right to instruct me on how to act as this was outside the law," and that directives should be issued exclusively from ZBH board members. Muradzikwa had previously been fired from three other state media organizations, reportedly under similar circumstances. His replacement, Happyton Muchechetere, was a senior ZBC journalist and former principal press officer in the office of the president. He is considered a staunch ZANU-PF loyalist.

¶12. ZANU-PF has established an information and publicity committee to spearhead Mugabe's run-off campaign, chaired by ruling party elder Patrick Chinimasa (who was also Minister of Justice until losing his seat in the March 29 parliamentary contest). Chinimasa and his committee will presumably control the content of The Herald now that Muradzikwa is no longer in control.

ZBC Leads the Way

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¶13. ZANU-PF's campaign theme is "100 percent Empowerment: Total Independence." On May 6, Information Minister Sikhanyiso Ndlovu gave a radio interview in which he echoed the ruling party's campaign tactic of linking Zimbabwe's sovereignty to ZANU-PF's continued leadership, stating that the role of ZBC was to "tell the true Zimbabwean story by having more programs on the liberation war...to remind people that so much blood was lost in order for them to enjoy today's independence." Local NGOs tracking media freedom report that the ZBC has devoted significant post-electoral reporting to politically-motivated violence in rural areas, attributing the bulk of culpability to the opposition and white farmers.

Attack on the Opposition Press

¶14. A 14-tonne truck belonging to the opposition The Zimbabwean newspaper was stopped and burned on Sunday. The truck was carrying 60,000 copies of Sunday's edition. (NOTE. The Zimbabwean is published in South African and trucked into Zimbabwe. END NOTE) The driver and distribution agent were badly beaten.

WATCH-DOG GROUPS REACT

¶15. Media watch-dog groups are privately relaying concern that, in addition to ZBC, the media environment will be far more restrictive than for the March 29 election. One expert asserted that while freedom of expression has always been limited in Zimbabwe, that now there is effectively none. With rural areas under the thumb of ruling party thugs, the ability of domestic journalists to garner first hand sources has been severely affected. Details of the re-accreditation process for journalists have yet to be announced by ZANU-PF, but many expect the process, similar to the last election, to be arduous. Previously journalists were required to be accredited twice- by both the Ministry of Information and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), allowing for multiple roadblocks to gaining permission to report. Only one journalist who received accreditation by the Ministry was denied it by ZEC; however, NGOs suspect this may become a more prevalent obstacle in the run-up to the June 27 contest.

¶16. Although foreign correspondents are expected to attempt to both officially and clandestinely return to Zimbabwe to cover the elections, media freedom NGOs assert that the government is planning to target and track local "fixers" used by foreigners to obtain sources. According to the NGOs, by impeding the correspondents'

ability to gain information from fixers, the ZANU-PF hopes to contain the amount of credible information that will reach international media houses. To counter this and other ruling party attempts to censor coverage, civil society organizations again plan to operate a communications center open to all journalists covering the election on June 27 in order to facilitate real-time information sharing.

¶17. COMMENT. There was extensive coverage of the March 29 elections both by accredited journalists and by international journalists who clandestinely entered the country. This coverage certainly played some role in the relative openness of the elections. Given ZANU-PF's intent to win the June 27 election at all costs, we expect to see continued prosecution and persecution of journalists in Zimbabwe, and efforts to prevent international journalists from coming to Zimbabwe. END COMMENT.

MCGEE

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